

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

The present invention is a method and apparatus for increasing the usefulness of visual knowledge in a number of applications. It distills the relationships between characteristics and hypotheses into database form, thereby  
5 organizing visual information in a manner suitable to aid the user in the investigation of the various hypotheses (medical diagnosis, pill identification, plant/animal identification, cause of death, cause of accident, etc.). The invention sidesteps unresolved issues around knowledge engineering by not automating a decision making process. Rather, the present invention utilizes a relational database to  
10 dynamically respond to textual and visual findings as an aid to assist a user reaching a reasoned conclusion based upon information available by direct observation and comparison with stored image and textual data.